

## Transferring good practice beyond organizational borders: lessons from transferring an entrepreneurship programme

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**TRANSFERRING GOOD PRACTICE BEYOND ORGANISATIONAL BORDERS:  
LESSONS FROM TRANSFERRING AN ENTREPRENEURSHIP PROGRAMME**

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Critical surveys paper!

TRANSFERRING GOOD PRACTICE BEYOND ORGANISATIONAL BORDERS:  
LESSONS FROM TRANSFERRING AN ENTREPRENEURSHIP PROGRAMME

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## ABSTRACT

This paper examines the transfer of a ‘good practice’ entrepreneurship initiative from Linköping in Sweden to nine other regions. It shows that the success of transferring ‘good practice’ is dependent on various pre-conditions in respect to the sender and recipient systems, as well as the interaction between these two systems. These include openness to continue the learning process and adapting the knowledge to be transferred to local conditions. A long-term commitment by both parties is also required which derives not only from the role of institutions, but also from enthusiastic individuals who drive the transfer process and sustainably link the systems after the initial transfer.

Entrepreneurship      knowledge transfer      learning systems      best practice  
academic entrepreneurship

MAGNUS KLOFSTEN, PETER HEYDEBRECK and DYLAN JONES-EVANS

优秀实践的跨组织边界转移：基于某企业家项目转移的经验，区域研究。本文考察了始于瑞典Linköping的一项“优秀实践”向其他九个区域转移的情况。研究表明，“优秀实践”转移的成功取决于与（知识）发送及接受系统相关的种种前提，以及上述两系统间的互动，包括：允许进行持续的学习以及自由选择用于转移到特定地点的知识。同时还需要双方都认可的长期合同，这不仅仅是为了考察机构作用，同时还是基于那些在完成了最初转移、并持续性地将上述系统联系起来的热情个体的需求。

企业家 知识转移 学习系统 优秀实践 学术企业家

Le transfert des meilleures pratiques au-delà des frontières organisationnelles: des leçons à tirer du transfert d'un programme favorisant l'esprit d'entreprise.

Cet article cherche à examiner le transfert des 'meilleures pratiques', sous forme d'une initiative favorisant l'esprit d'entreprise, de Linköping en Suède à neuf autres régions. On montre que réussir à transférer les 'meilleures pratiques' dépend des conditions préalables différentes pour ce qui est du système de la zone d'origine et celui de la zone d'accueil, aussi bien que de l'interaction entre ces deux systèmes. Celles-là comprennent être prêt à développer l'apprentissage et à adapter la connaissance à transférer aux conditions locales. Il faut aussi un engagement à long terme des deux parties qui remonte non seulement du rôle des institutions, mais aussi des individus enthousiastes qui pilotent le processus de transfert et relie durablement les systèmes suite au transfert initial.

Esprit d'entreprise / Transfert de la connaissance / Systèmes d'apprentissage / Meilleures pratiques / Esprit d'entreprise académique

### **Übertragung guter Praxis über organisationelle Grenzen hinweg: Lektionen aus der Übertragung eines Programms für Unternehmertum**

MAGNUS KLOFSTEN, PETER HEYDEBRECK and DYLAN JONES-EVANS

In diesem Beitrag überprüfen wir die Übertragung einer Unternehmensinitiative für 'gute Praxis' von Linköping in Schweden nach neun anderen Regionen. Wie sich zeigt, hängt der Erfolg einer Übertragung 'guter Praxis' von verschiedenen Vorbedingungen hinsichtlich der Systeme des Senders und Empfängers sowie von den Wechselwirkungen zwischen diesen beiden Systemen ab. Zu diesen Vorbedingungen gehört eine Bereitschaft zur Fortsetzung des Lernprozesses und zur Anpassung des übertragenen Wissens an die Bedingungen vor Ort. Ebenso ist ein langfristiges Engagement beider Seiten erforderlich, das sich nicht nur aus der Rolle der Institutionen ableitet, sondern auch von enthusiastischen Einzelpersonen gefördert wird, die den Übertragungsprozess vorantreiben und die Systeme nach der ersten Übertragung dauerhaft miteinander verknüpfen.

#### **KEYWORDS:**

Unternehmertum

Wissensübertragung

Lernsysteme

Beste Praxis

Akademisches Unternehmertum

Transferir buenas prácticas tras las fronteras organizativas: lecciones de traspasar un programa empresarial

Magnus Klofsten, Peter Heydebreck And Dylan Jones-Evans

En este artículo analizamos la transferencia de una iniciativa empresarial de 'buenas prácticas' de Linköping en Suecia a otras nueve regiones. Se demuestra que el éxito de transferir 'buenas prácticas' depende de diferentes precondiciones con respecto a los sistemas del emisor y el receptor, así como de la interacción entre estos dos sistemas. Estas precondiciones incluirían la disposición a continuar el proceso de aprendizaje y adaptar el conocimiento que se transferirá a las condiciones locales. También es necesario un compromiso a largo plazo por ambas partes que surja no sólo del rol de las instituciones sino también de individuos entusiastas que estimulen el proceso de transferencia y enlacen de modo sostenible los sistemas después de la transferencia inicial.

KEYWORDS:

Empresariado

Transferencia del conocimiento

Sistemas de aprendizaje

Buenas prácticas

Empresariado académico

JEL CLASSIFICATIONS    M13, O32, R10

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INTRODUCTION

Greater commercialisation of R&D from the university sector is seen as one of the key drivers of the future economic growth of many nations, although there is an increasing consensus that Europe continues to lag behind the U.S. and Japan in this respect. Whilst European researchers produce scientific results which are comparable to those in the United States, these results are not commercialised as frequently and quickly as in competing nations (OECD, 2002).

At a sub-national level, policymakers have also recognised the important role of the university in developing the innovation potential of a region (JONES-EVANS and KLOFSTEN, 2000; HOMMEN *et al*, 2006; BENNEWORTH, 2007) with an increasing number of academic institutions becoming involved in certain commercialisation activities such as the protection of intellectual property through patenting and licensing activities and the encouragement of spin-offs that originate from university research (ETZKOWITZ, 2005). There is also external pressure on universities to achieve an increase in the effectiveness and efficiency of their contribution to regional economic development and competitiveness (CLARK, 1998; ETZKOWITZ and KLOFSTEN, 2005), especially in developing initiatives aimed at boosting entrepreneurship and innovation within local firms.

As a result, there has been an increase in the number of initiatives at a European, national and regional level to encourage greater linkages between universities and industry (JONES-EVANS and KLOFSTEN, 1998; COOKE and LEYDESDORFF, 2005; BERGEK and NORRMAN, 2008) with a concomitant focus by policymakers on identifying ‘best practice’ in commercialisation activities and transferring these to other regions to generate knowledge-based sustainable economic growth (POLT *et al*

2001).

Not surprisingly, there have been criticisms of the practice of encouraging the transfer of policy initiatives from one region to another. For example, TODTLING and TRIPPLE (2005) have argued that whilst many regional innovation policies have been shaped by good practice derived from well performing regions, there is no ideal model for innovation policy as innovation activities will differ between different types of areas with respect to their preconditions for innovation, networking and innovation barriers. HOSPERS (2006) has also evaluated the usefulness of the diffusion of 'best practice' in regional policy in order to identify the lessons that should really be drawn from regional success stories. He suggests that adopting 'best practice' in regional policy is, at best, limited, as the very conditions that explain the success of a particular region will be the most difficult elements to learn from i.e. the success of a region is determined by its culture, its history, and its institutional set up, and even the most powerful 'best practice' policy will only have a limited effect (HOSPERS, 2006; WINK, 2003).

Whilst these criticisms are valid, they may not have taken into account the potential role of the actors within the knowledge transfer system and, it can be argued, one of the key limitations to the transfer of 'best' or 'good' practice between regions is the pre-dominance of third party actors, such as consultants, who will only have access to 'public knowledge' produced by the good practice actor (KLOFSTEN and JONES-EVANS, 1996) rather than any confidential information from the good practice system itself. As a result, any learning from third party experience can only be effective if the 'champions' who initiated and managed the good practice case in one region are substantially involved in the implementation of lessons learned by a partner in another region.



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Consequently, this paper investigates ways of establishing partnerships between a good practice case of stimulating and fostering a supportive entrepreneurial environment in one region and partner systems in other regions, a process which is characterized by mutual trust, motivation and competence. When the relationship is established, knowledge and experience can be effectively communicated and jointly adapted to the recipients' systems. Once in place, the 'good practice' needs to be continuously improved and further developed in respect to knowledge content and its transferability.

**AIM AND SCOPE**

This paper examines the key factors in successfully transferring good practice in regional policy beyond organisational borders between the 'sender' (the originator of the good practice) and recipient organisations. Of course, analysis of good practice in regional policy can result in collections of anecdotal evidence that will have little benefit to the actors involved. As a result, most attempts to learn from others will fail before the knowledge transfer process is initiated properly. In this paper, the inter-organisational transfer of good practice is perceived as the initiation, implementation, and mainstreaming of one system's superior routine use of knowledge (including tacit components) into the recipient's system (NELSON and WINTER 1982; KOGUT and ZANDER, 1992). Whereas there is a substantial pent-up demand in respect to empirical studies on the key determinants of inter-organisational transfer of good practice, there is some evidence in respect to how to make use of good practice within an organisation. Although this particular study has a strong exploratory character, the theoretical framework is based on the experiences of intra-organisational transfers of good

practice.

In this paper, success is partly determined by the quality and complexity of what is to be transferred and the quality of the transfer process itself. It draws partly on the work of SZULANSKI (1996), who identified the complexity and uncertainty with respect to the causal mechanisms in ensuring success as one of the three most important determinants of transferring good practice within an organisation. Due to the exploratory nature of the work, no specific hypotheses have been formulated, although particular attention has been paid to a set of three variables:

- *Absorptive capacity of the recipient.* This would include the ability of a firm to recognise the value of new externally generated information, its assimilation and application to commercial ends (COHEN and LEVINTHAL, 1990). This capacity is primarily determined by the attitudes of the recipient (such as the not-invented here syndrome or a motivation to engage in transfer process) and the assets of the recipient (dedication to both the learning process and the implementation of the good practice).
- *Characteristics of the sender.* The important factors here are the attitudes of the sender (including openness to allow re-branding of the good practice and the motivation to engage in transfer process) and the assets of the sender (reputation and transfer champions). The decisive importance of the sender for the efficiency and effectiveness of communication within a transfer process has been empirically validated in wide range of different disciplines. For instance, human resource management theory defines different roles in the communication process both within the firm as well as between the firm and its business environment, highlighting the importance of a clear communication strategy (FRINK and

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KLIMOSKI, 2004).

- *The transfer of knowledge from one system to another.* This is no ‘spot market’ interaction but, as discussed in HÅKANSSON and JOHANSON (2001), is a long-term process which requires a sustainable and learning environment and a trust-based relationship. Within the framework of this study, we have focused on examining a relationship’s degree of mutual trust, its power balance, and geographic/cultural proximity between partners as well as some key determinants of these variables such as the duration of the relationship and its impact on trust between partners.

Obviously, the three variables above do not constitute an exhaustive list of relevant success determinants of the knowledge transfer process. However, we believe that it makes sense to focus on these three as most other variables will either be identical for all analysed transfer processes or be determinants of the three variables we analyse. For instance, it will have a major impact on the transfer process if the sender system competes with other sender systems or with some parts of the recipient system and its close affiliates. Such competition will then be mirrored in the recipient system’s motivation, the sender system’s reputation (is the sender seen as the only provider, the best provider, or simply a possible provider amongst others?), and trust and openness amongst partners (is the sender system invited to actively participate in the definition of the transfer process or has the recipient system defined the process and asked or competitive tenders?). Figure 1 illustrates the authors’ theoretical frame of reference.

Insert figure 1 here

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3 Whilst SZULANSKI (1996) found statistically significant evidence that the part-  
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Whilst SZULANSKI (1996) found statistically significant evidence that the partners' motivation is of limited importance for the success of knowledge transfer, this aspect is still included as a key construct in this paper's frame of reference. This is because Szulanski's finding only holds true for intra-organisational processes (i.e. within an organisation) where the lack of motivation of sender and recipient can be partly compensated with hierarchical power. Inter-organisational relationships, as found in the type of knowledge transfer examined in this paper, are dependent on the dedication of all involved parties.

Another purpose of the paper is to increase awareness of the crucial importance of process-related 'how-questions' which tend to be overshadowed by the more appealing 'what questions'. Furthermore, the authors wish to provide an insight into the communication of 'how-knowledge' between actors i.e. how partners can increase their success rate in accessing, adapting and implanting other systems' knowledge. Ultimately, this would lead to an increased number of knowledge transfer processes supporting both universities and companies and engaging in valorising academic know-how.

## METHOD

### *The sample*

This paper has selected the transfer of a university entrepreneurship programme to other milieus as the object of analysis. In total, nine transfer processes have been analysed and the sample was selected by drawing upon the following criteria.

The first selection criterion is the success of the object of transfer, namely the Linköping Entrepreneurship programme (ENP). This was launched in 1994 to sup-

plement support activities for knowledge-intensive firms with roots in the university milieu. Since its commencement, participants from the programme have established about 130 firms, with 30 firms growing to employ over 10 employees. The Centre for Innovation and Entrepreneurship (CIE) at Linköping University developed the ENP as an outgrowth of the experience at the university in supporting established firms and their ability in encouraging spin-offs from these firms. At that time, support programmes were not geared towards younger entrepreneurs and this new initiative was aimed at improving the frequency and quality of new start-ups emerging directly from the university. The two main targets of the tuition-free programme were university staff and students, in addition to staff within knowledge-intensive local organisations. On average, twenty participants took part in each programme with the aim of initiating 15 new firms. Each programme lasted between four and six months, allowing participants to work or study concurrently.

Since starting a new business requires various kinds of knowledge, the ENP covers a wide range of topics, including business development, funding, leadership, legal matters and presentation techniques, through the following methods:

- *Business development plan* - Participants develop simple business plans to structure and clarify their ideas.
- *Workshops* - Primary components in the business development process are addressed. Presentation of the business idea is emphasized.
- *Mentoring* - Each participant is assigned a mentor who has been or still is a senior entrepreneur.
- *Supervision* - Each group is assigned a supervisor for progress checks and coaching.

Participants are expected to possess driving force and commitment prior to joining

the programme and must be open about their ideas for their business plans. In addition, the trainers involved in teaching the programmes cannot take equity stakes or be operatively involved in the participating ventures. Access to a network of experienced entrepreneurs and to financiers and supporting organisations are other vital components of training.

The second selection criterion is that the object of transfer has been transferred a substantial number of times beyond organisational borders, with a track record of a minimum of five years of transfer in order to capture strategic effects. Initially, CIE did not intend to transfer the programme to other parts of Sweden but due to the programme's initial success in the home region, the former CEO of the Technology Park in Västerås contacted CIE in 1999 to request a proposal for an entrepreneurship programme for his region. CIE (the sender) provided fee-based delivery of ENP's conceptual content and human resources under the following conditions:

- CIE provides a programme leader, coach, and conducts workshops
- The receiving partner provides on-site coordination, recruitment of participants and mentors and organization of training premises, audio visual and technical equipment, and other infrastructural tasks.
- The on-site assistant programme leader should become programme leader once the sender has transferred the ENP programme to the recipient.
- The recipient markets the programme.
- Sender and recipient agree to exchange information informally over a prolonged time period.
- The recipient gradually takes over and carries on the programme independently.

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The first replication of the ENP proved enormously successful and other cities in Sweden inquired about starting similar programmes. As a result, the importance of the external programmes grew, both financially and for competence and network development, for the CIE at the University of Linköping. Indeed, the added value of ENP’s transfer to other regions strengthened the home programme in Linköping and the virtual network of handpicked, experienced entrepreneurs made it possible to conduct various ENPs simultaneously in different locations. These persons, some 20 in all, have been regularly engaged in programme execution and have become a close-knit group adding enormous value to the process of knowledge transfer.

Transnational transfer of the programme began in 2003 as part of the European Union-funded Unispin project (SIDJE and TILBURG, 2000). It was initially transferred to Moldavia and was followed by the Kaluga region in Russia in 2004. As of mid-2006, about 50 programmes had been conducted (less than half in the Linköping area) and 500 new businesses created. Programme statistics show that 75 per cent of all project ideas developed within the programme become businesses, with a survival rate of 70 per cent, and one in five of the businesses from the programme now have more than five employees.

The third and final selection criterion is full access to sensitive data from the good practice system and the recipients’ systems.

**DATA COLLECTION**

The nature of the subject demands a qualitative-based approach and broad open-ended questions were employed in order to encourage the respondents to narrate more freely.

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3 Interview probes have been used to clarify statements and their meaning and to elabo-  
4 rate on the participant's experiences and judgements on the transfer process and its  
5 impact. Aspects of the 'critical incidence' technique (FLANAGAN, 1954; POLIT and  
6 HUNGLER, 1999) were also used in asking respondents about episodes of helpful  
7 and unhelpful elements in the preparation and implementation of the transfer process.  
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11 Data has been collected through face-to-face interviews with key stakeholders in the  
12 original Linköping environment as well as in the recipients' environments, i.e. the  
13 model developer, financial bodies, programme participants/clients, transfer agents and  
14 operative staff. Twelve in-depth face-to-face interviews were performed, taking a  
15 minimum of two hours and typically followed-up by a series of shorter conversations.  
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17 More specifically, the key representatives of nine recipient milieus have been inter-  
18 viewed and three key people from the sender system have been interviewed. An addi-  
19 tional forty interviews addressing specific aspects identified in the core interviews and  
20 in the follow-up interviews were also conducted. Therefore, a total of 21 interviews  
21 have been conducted with participants in the courses (three interviews in Linköping  
22 and two interviews in each recipient milieu, with 14 interviews performed with pro-  
23 gramme directors and trainers in the recipient milieus). In addition, five Linköping  
24 trainers acting as programme leaders were interviewed in order to analyse and vali-  
25 date the underlying reasons for challenges in the knowledge transfer process.  
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29 The interview findings have been systemised and complemented by previous evalu-  
30 ations of the entrepreneurship programme scheme with different foci (KLOFSTEN,  
31 2000; 2008). The results and conclusions have been validated with the interview part-  
32 ners who have proofread the documentation of the interviews and the final version of  
33 the paper.  
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**OPERATIONALISATION OF TRANSFER SUCCESS AND DESCRIPTIVE FINDINGS**

Within the framework of the study, the authors have measured the importance of different determinants for transfer success pursuing two complementary approaches. First of all, the critical incidence method has been employed to identify decisive moments for overall transfer success and to judge the adequacy of measures employed to master key challenges. Although implementation of the entrepreneurship programme has been relatively smooth, problems have occurred with workshop content and its presentation. However, the principal problem has not been how to transfer programme content, but how to transfer the personal experience and professional expertise of the CIE staff.

Secondly, the overall success was measured after implementation of the transfer and was measured as the satisfaction of the recipient, the recipient's clients and the sender. The main subjective indicators used comprised of a number of elements such as the partners' statements on whether they had engaged in the transfer process if they had known what they know today upfront (the key representatives of all nine recipient systems answered positively although this question was not asked to course participants); the partners' satisfaction with the total cost of the transfer process (both in terms of financial resources and human resources); and the time to transfer the best practice and impact of the transfer in the respective milieu (in the case of participants' impact on the participant). Satisfaction was measured on a six point rating scale where the respondent was asked to rate his judgement on the actual transfer process relative to his expectations before the transfer process started (table 1).

**Insert table 1 here**

The expectations of the recipients in respect to costs were very realistic, as initial discussions between sender and recipient emphasised the necessity for substantial contribution of human resources from the recipient. Overall, the expectations in respect to time (measured in months) were also realistic and well met. However, both the sender and recipient considered further potential for speeding up the process. Two recipient representatives believed upfront that they would be capable to conduct the transfer process substantially faster than it could be done in previous cases. These expectations were not satisfied.

The positive feedback on the impact was high and there appears to be a direct relationship between the perception of the success and the length of participation in the programme. It is also remarkable that all sender representatives expected a positive impact of the transfer process on their home system and even more remarkable that these expectations were over achieved. Apart from obvious gains in terms of reputation and funding, sender representatives stressed the aspects of mutual learning, both in terms of running a programme and in terms of transferring the knowledge from the programme. Furthermore, the sender emphasised the benefits of interlinking the different communities. This illustrates that the transfer of a good practice is a dyadic process where both sender and recipient benefit. Actually, one might ask whether transfer of good practice is an adequate label for such a partnership at all and it may be more relevant to describe this as a good practice based mutual learning process.

Eight of the recipient systems have continued with their new programmes whereas one has stopped all related activities due to serious budget cuts. Four recipient systems currently serve as reference clients to the sender. Meanwhile, the sender has

broadened from transferring the good practice programme to other regions to developing and implementing programmes for specific client groups without a narrow geographical focus (e.g. industry associations).

The analysis in this paper is based on subjective data mainly due to the following three reasons:

- The good practice policy has been transferred to a set of quite heterogeneous recipient milieus, although it is important to compare the quality of the process to these different milieus. Consequently, we opted for subjective data allowing the respondents to take into account specific local circumstances (e.g. language barriers in the Russian case, non-existence of a university in the Lidköping case).
- The importance of the different dimensions of the quality of the transfer process varies from case to case. An adequate aggregation of objective data (such as the total costs of the transfer process, number of start-ups in the recipient's milieu due to the transfer process) is hardly possible. Consequently, the individual recipients were asked to integrate their satisfaction with specific aspects and the importance of these aspects in summarising judgements of satisfaction.
- Partners' satisfaction is the key determinant of the partners' future action. This determines whether the recipient will serve as a reference client and whether the sender, before transferring to other environments, will undertake substantial changes to the transfer process before doing so.

**SUCCESS DETERMINANTS IN THE TRANSFER OF GOOD PRACTICE**

Based upon our theoretical frame of reference, we have attempted to specify the theo-

retical constructs which determine the success of a transfer of a practice. Apart from the quality of the practice itself (which is more or less constant for all cases analysed as it is always the ENP programme which is transferred), the main determinant is the quality of the transfer process. The findings show that even the quality of the process is overall judged as good, which implies that no systematic comparisons can be made between successful and unsuccessful transfer processes due to limited variance. Consequently, the authors have thoroughly investigated what the partners involved in the transfer process actually judged as the decisive explanations of success. This exploratory qualitative research results in the following specification of the theoretical constructs:

*Delivery capacity of sender: Motivation (success-based transfer fee).*

The programme must satisfy a mutual need for both recipient and sender. A strong regional growth initiative that includes plans for marketing communications, trade-marking, branding and promotion is conducive to the ENP transfer. The recipient should be assured that the model is well known and has been successful elsewhere. The sender should also receive a “royalty” from revenues for ongoing improvement and recognition of its high quality. This reciprocity allows both parties to enjoy success while supporting each other, although the recipient’s needs must remain central both during and following the completion of the transfer. The transfer of knowledge is pedagogic in nature (sender) and fulfils a need to learn (recipient). A constant transfer of knowledge between sender and recipient allows continual development of the ENP and generates knowledge for the sender. A programme representative from the sender put it as follows “We continuously improve the programme based upon the feedback

we receive. Thus, we always deliver a bit more than the client expects. This is more or less a guarantee for repeated business”. All experience gleaned from testing the programme in other environments with different types of participants by programme managers, coaches, and workshop leaders is beneficial to the home programme in Linköping and to future programme transfers to other communities.

*Delivery capacity of sender: Competence (holder of a transferable model).*

The recipient will only be interested in well-tested, successful models and the sender will not want to undertake a transfer process unless the participating partner has every chance to succeed. However, the model must be transferable and the basic elements in any entrepreneurship programme (workshops, mentoring, coaching) are well known. Quality and programme transferability will vary depending on controls established for recruitment of participants and relationships between management and participants. A key characteristic of management – responsible for transfer of the programme’s soft values – is the ability to inspire participants in their work.

*Key characteristic of the relationship between sender and recipient: Openness.*

In principle, the information exchange between sender and recipient should be unlimited and open during all stages of programme transfer and implementation. This builds a firm foundation for future development. Recipients’ tasks include progress reports on the budget, recruitment of participants and mentors, programme evaluations and suggestions for future co-operation. Senders should propose new ideas and methods for developing and improving the programme.

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6 *Key characteristic of the relationship between sender and recipient: enthusiasts with*  
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8 *community support.*  
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13 People with strong driving forces who are prepared to invest whole-heartedly in the  
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15 process are the key to the successful transfer of the ENP programme. As one said,  
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17 “Without Evert (the programme leader of the sender), we would never have suc-  
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19 ceeded.” In return, the community in which these people will work must support them  
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21 strongly. One question that should be addressed in advance is how much external  
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23 competence the recipient needs in order to establish its own programme as total re-  
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25 source needs and the overall timing of the transfer of the programme can then be de-  
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27 termined. Enthusiasts must have the courage to bridge barriers and create opportuni-  
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29 ties for the adoption of external ideas, and both senders and recipients need such en-  
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31 thusiasts on their teams.  
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39 *Key characteristic of the relationship between sender and recipient: partners sharing*  
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41 *common view on success.*  
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47 The measurement of the success of an entrepreneurship programme is not obvious and  
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49 concrete results - such as the development of a cluster of growing companies – can  
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51 take years to achieve. Typical criteria for success include the number of programme  
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53 applicants, the number of applicants qualified to participate, the quality of final com-  
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55 pany presentations, the programme evaluations, and the number of participants who  
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57 actually start a company. One way or another, a programme should prove that it actu-  
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59 ally fosters new companies.  
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*Absorptive capacity of the recipient: critical mass of resources.*

Long-term access to resources such as infrastructure (premises, administration and equipment), finance, and local mentors are essential to the success of a transfer. A critical voice from a recipient system put it as follows, “You cannot expect us to start working on the basis of a promise. We need financial resources dedicated to the programme. Once the financial situation was clear, things went very well, although we could have avoided the initial delay”. Therefore, recipients must plan how to sustain the programme under its own management during the initial stages of programme development. Although the recipient should prove its ability in managing the ENP, it is also entitled to make demands concerning programme content and quality.

*Key characteristic of the relationship between sender and recipient: champions.*

In practice, successful transfer of the ENP model depends on recruiting human resources who have an experienced understanding of the entrepreneurial processes involved in the early stages of a new firm’s development. As a sender representative put it “It would be almost impossible to fail with the entrepreneur of the year onboard”. All ENP staff should have this trait, and programme leaders will have actually run a company previously. As a result, they make the best role models for younger entrepreneurs and are a vital component of the programme. The programme leader is central to the programme’s execution and must always be present. This person is an important link between the sender and the recipient and must anticipate programme changes, communicate information, and share participant’s achievements. Since the

programme leader is an important purveyor of the programme's philosophy, the leader must be chosen with care.

## CONCLUDING REMARKS

The demand for good practice studies and benchmarking exercises have received considerable attention from policymakers, although there remains a worrying lack of knowledge on how to make use of all these studies, especially if third party actors alone are involved in transferring programmes between regions. This paper shows the critical role of the original developer of the programme in ensuring that the "sender system" and the "recipient system" engage in a long-term trust-based relationship.

Since most studies of the transfer of good practice focus on intra-organisational applications (SZULANSKI, 1996), the vital aspect of partner selection has not been given adequate attention. As this paper indicates, in transferring good practice between different regions, it is vital that the complementarities between the sending and receiving systems is encouraged through the careful selection of partners and further investment into the on-going relationship. In particular, such partner systems should:

- Have consciously implemented a relevant process of outstanding effectiveness and efficiency in order that it makes sense to learn what it takes to succeed from them.
- Have succeeded under similar circumstances (in respect to the determinants of a superior process design) in order to make the lessons learned relevant for the transfer.
- Be motivated to fully share their insights and support the transfer of know-how in order to make use of even sensitive but crucial information (e.g. what was done



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- wrongly), speed up the transfer into the recipient system and serve as partner for continued mutual learning.
- Be known as a successful system in order to overcome scepticism from recipients.
  - Be “close” to the recipient system both in terms of geographical distance and, if possible, language in order to limit transaction costs.

Critically, the relationship between sender and recipient has to be honoured and communicated as important by both partners as policy makers can hardly be expected to enforce such bilateral or small network exercises. However, they can establish arenas and platforms of mutual learning where members learn *with* each other instead of just *from* each other and where members build up the necessary trust to invest into bilateral relationships.

The authors hope that this paper contributes to the discussion on how to ensure that much more of the existing knowledge within good practice initiatives can be successfully applied to other regions. Whereas there is a growing consensus that there needs to be better valorisation of the research results emerging from universities and an increased awareness of good valorisation practices, there still is a huge demand for additional research to fully understand the success determinants of integrating third party good practice in a given system. There is also a need to provide support for developing policies supporting such knowledge transfer processes and to further develop the process by which valorisation takes place professionally.

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Table 1. The quality of the transfer process

		Better than expected despite high expectation	Better than ex- pected	Good as expected	Poor as expected	Worse than expected	Worse than expected despite low expectation
Transfer costs	Linköping representatives			3			
	Recipient representatives	1	3	5			
Transfer time	Linköping representatives			2	1		
	Recipient representatives		2	4	1	2	
Impact on sender	Linköping representatives		1	2			
Impact on recipient system	Linköping representatives		1	2			
	Recipient representatives	1	3	5			
Impact on participant	Course participants	7	5	9			

Figure 1: Key variables in the transfer of good practice

